

Once a person decides not to use drugs anymore, how does that person end up using again? Do relapses happen completely by accident? Or are there warning signs and ways to avoid relapse?

Relapse justification is a process that happens in people's minds. A person may have decided to stop using, but the person's brain is still healing and still feels the need for the substances. The addicted brain invents excuses that allow the person in recovery to edge close enough to relapse situations that accidents can happen. You may remember a time when you intended to stay drug free but you invented a justification for using, and before you knew it, you had used again.

Understanding and anticipating the justifications help you interrupt the process. Use the questions below to help you identify justifications you might be susceptible to.

Substance Dependence Is Cured

Has your addicted brain ever convinced you that you could use just once or use just a little? For example, have you said any of the following?

- I'm back in control. I'll be able to stop when I want to.
- I've learned my lesson. I'll only use small amounts and only once in a while.
- This substance was not my problem—stimulants were. So I can use this and not relapse.
- Other: _____

Testing Yourself

It's very easy to forget that being smart, not being strong, is the key to staying abstinent.

Have you ever wanted to prove you could be stronger than drugs? For example, have you said any of the following?

- I'm strong enough to be around it now.
- I want to see whether I can say "No" to drinking and using.
- I want to see whether I can be around my old friends.
- I want to see how the high feels now that I've stopped using.
- Other: _____

Celebrating

You may be encouraged by other people or your addicted brain to make an exception to your abstinence. **Have you ever tried to justify using with the following thoughts?**

- I'm feeling really good. One time won't hurt.
- I'm on vacation. I'll go back to not using when I get home.
- I'm doing so well. Things are going great. I owe myself a reward.
- This is such a special event that I want to celebrate.
- Other: _____

What might you do when confronted with these excuses to use?
